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ABSTRACT

The National Council of La Raza has developed five innovative community based demonstration projects to improve the educational outcomes of Hispanics. Three of the projects are designed to address high risk students; the remaining two address the needs of parents and teachers. Each of these projects is designed to be implemented by Hispanic community-based organizations, in cooperation with parents, schools, the business community, and other local organizations. The role of the National Council of La Raza in the projects includes the following: (1) securing resources; (2) providing training and technical assistance; (3) monitoring and evaluating; and (4) facilitating information exchange. The five model projects are the following: (1) the Academia del Pueblo, addressing early academic failure and grade retention on the elementary level; (2) Project Success, designed to improve high school graduation and college entrance rates; (3) Project Second Chance, designed to assist dropouts in obtaining either a high school diploma, or a high school equivalency certificate; (4) Parents as Partners, designed to train and assist parents to help their children achieve academically; and (5) the Teacher Support Network, designed to provide Hispanic teachers, and other teachers working with Hispanic children, with the latest educational research, curriculum, and community support. Detailed descriptions of Project Success and the Teacher Support Network are included. (FMW)

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The Innovative Education Project: Summary Description of Program Models

National Council of La Raza

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THE INNOVATIVE EDUCATION PROJECT:

Summary Description of Program Models

I. Introduction

Over the last several years, the National Council of La Raza has been engaged in an effort to develop and demonstrate five innovative community-based approaches to improve the educational status of Hispanics. Three of the five projects are designed to address the school-age groups and special populations which both national research and local community experience indicate are among the most educationally "at-risk." The remaining two projects address the needs of parents and teachers, whose informed assistance is essential to improve educational outcomes for Hispanic children and youth. Support for initial program development efforts was provided primarily by a grant from the American Can Company Foundation. Further development and technical and evaluation assistance to local groups seeking to demonstrate the models has been supported by grants from the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the AT&T Foundation.

There is an overwhelming need for community-based educational programs which can supplement school offerings and work with parents and teachers to increase their ability to help Hispanic children learn. Educational outcomes for Hispanics are well below those for other major U.S. subgroups, and current levels of local, state and federal resources devoted to improving the situation are inadequate. In addition, efforts which are solely remedial and not preventive in nature do not improve the education provided for the thousands of Hispanic children entering school each year. While the Council continues to work at the national level to advocate systemic reforms in teacher training, parent and adult education, effective school practices and programs, and appropriate programs for at-risk children, the Council also believes that much change can be effectively initiated through community-generated local projects.

The five models being demonstrated are:

- **The Academia del Pueblo,** which addresses the problems of early academic failure and grade retention faced by many Hispanic children in elementary school, by establishing after-school and summer "academies" to provide reinforcement and supplemental educational assistance to help children meet and exceed grade promotion requirements in elementary school;

- **Project Success**, which is designed to serve Hispanic youth in junior high schools to increase their high school completion and college entrance rates by providing them with academic enrichment, career and academic counseling and other special opportunities;

- **Project Second Chance**, which serves those youth who have already left school -- Hispanic dropouts -- and provides them with both education and counseling so that they can either gain a high school equivalency certificate or diploma;

- **Parents as Partners**, which recognizes that Hispanics parents are their children's most important teachers but often lack the necessary skills to help their children progress successfully through school, and provides training and assistance to parents so they can become active partners in their children's education.

- **The Teacher Support Network**, which brings community resources together to provide training and assistance to Hispanic teachers and other teachers working with Hispanic children so that those teachers may benefit from the latest educational research and curriculum and receive greater community support for their efforts.

Each of these projects is designed to be implemented by Hispanic community-based organizations, in cooperation with parents, schools, members of the business and corporate communities and other appropriate local organizations. The National Council of La Raza assists demonstration sites in securing resources to demonstrate the selected model project. The Council also provides demonstration sites with the necessary training and technical assistance to implement the models, and monitors and evaluates the projects. Additionally, the Council facilitates the transfer of information among demonstration projects, so that the various projects can learn from each other's successes and errors.

II. Description of Models

A. The Academia del Pueblo

Early school failure has been shown to be perhaps the greatest predictor of a child's later dropping out of school, and at each grade level a higher percentage of Hispanic children are enrolled below grade level than are White children. According to the 1985 Current Population Survey, approximately 28.0% of Hispanic children in grades one through four were enrolled behind modal grade -- that is, the grade in which they would normally be expected to be enrolled given their age. The proportion below grade level rises to 39.5% among Hispanic children in grades five through eight, and 43.1% in grades nine and ten. A recent report from California indicates that **achievement** below grade level is even more widespread; 80% of Hispanic fluent-English speaking youngsters were reported to be performing below grade level by third grade.

The Academia del Pueblo is a community-based after-school and summer educational program designed to help elementary school-aged children meet and/or exceed grade promotion requirements and thereby reduce the rate of school delay among Hispanic children. This program provides reading reinforcement and supplemental educational activities to help children master required skills and build upon what is taught in local schools. The concentration is on strengthening children's English language skills, especially reading and writing. It serves both English-fluent and limited-English proficient children, helping to assure that they receive the services needed to speak, understand, read and write English fluently.

The Academia also includes a Spanish language component, designed to build upon children's native language skills or to introduce Spanish as a second language. Depending upon local needs, including whether or not there is a bilingual program available in the local schools, Spanish may also be used as a language of instruction for other subjects such as math and social studies. The Academia program for "at-risk" children is designed to meet for approximately two hours per day after school and to offer two-day and four-day programs, depending on the children's needs. While the general focus of the Academia is to provide enrichment and remedial educational support for at-risk children, the Academia may also offer programming for gifted children.

Each Academia is to create and nourish a three-way partnership between the Academia, parents and the cooperating local school(s). Each Academia operates in cooperation with selected local schools whose teachers -- with the permission of parents -- provide Academia staff with information on individual student progress, and work with the Academia to identify the individual needs of each student. In return, teachers are provided with quarterly reports from the Academia on student attendance and progress, and assistance in increasing parent participation in education. The Academia is also designed to utilize some public and/or private school teachers as after-school and summer Academia teachers, which further strengthens the school-Academia linkages.

Parent involvement is a critical part of the Academia model. There is a very slight charge for enrollment in the Academia (usually no more than $15.00 per session with a fee-waiver available), however, in order to enroll a child in the Academia program, parents must sign a cooperative learning plan in which they agree to:

- Establish household rules about homework and help their children comply with those rules;
- Review and sign the child's homework on a daily basis so the teacher know that the parent has seen the homework;
- Help their children obtain a library card;
- Read to their child, or have their child read out loud to them for an individually-determined number of minutes per week; and
- Attend at least half the parent training seminars or meetings organized by the Academia.

The Academia provides a monthly seminar or training activity for parents, concentrating on teaching parents about child development and learning reinforcement techniques to use at home. The meetings are also used to provide parents with progress reports and information about their child's attendance and work at school and in the Academia.

The Academia staff may be composed of teachers, student teachers and interns from local colleges and universities, retired teachers and administrators, and high school honor students serving as peer tutors. However, there must be at least one lead teacher who is a fully credentialed and experienced classroom teacher. The student tutors are an especially important part of the Academia, since they not only provide instruction but also serve as role models for the children. Core Academia staff must be bilingual. The Academia must offer regular staff development seminars for all staff to discuss and demonstrate various teaching methods and new curricula, to share information on emerging educational research, and to facilitate the development of staff-initiated curricula and special programs. The Academia includes planning and staff development time as part of the teachers' paid time as staff are expected to work with the Academia director to develop and adjust programs and teaching strategies and to maintain frequent contact wit parents and regular school teachers.

B. Project Success

Curricular tracking, which typically becomes formalized in junior high school, often causes Hispanic students to be placed in curricular programs which have no exit and no future. The curricular tracks that most Hispanic students are assigned to seem to increase the risk that they will leave school without a diploma or the skills necessary to be productive adults in competitive jobs. Dropout rates are far higher among youth in general education and vocational tracks than those in academic curricular tracks. Even when youth do successfully complete a vocational track, recent research indicates that most employers prefer workers who are fully literate and know how to learn other new skills, rather than those who are simply narrowly trained in a specific vocation or trade, which may be obsolete by the time the youth enters the labor market. While high quality vocational programs are a valid course for some students, many vocational programs do not meet that quality test. After extensive testimony on the out-datedness and lack of academic skills taught in many vocational education programs, the federal government passed sweeping changes in the federal Vocational Education Act in 1984. However, those changes, where they are implemented, will take some time to trickle down to the local level, and will affect only vocational programs, not the "general" education tracks.

Thus, Hispanic students are disproportionately enrolled in curricular programs of questionable quality and usefulness. By their senior year in high school, three out of four Hispanic youth have been placed in tracks which make college enrollment unlikely. Over-enrollment in these tracks occurs in part because of routine tracking by counselors and teachers with low expectations for Hispanic children, and in part because Hispanic children and parents lack information about other options. Also, as a result of early school failures, many Hispanic junior high school and high school students are substantially below grade level in achievement and need supplemental tutoring and

remediation to be able to participate successfully in academic classes. While Hispanic parents and students have high educational and occupational aspirations, both often lack information to make those dreams become reality.

Project Success is an after-school and summer program for at-risk junior and senior high school students, designed to help youth complete high school and become more informed about higher education and career options, and to increase the number of youth who enroll in and successfully complete academic high school curricular tracks. Project Success is designed to be implemented by community-based organizations in cooperation with junior high and middle schools serving students from the community organization's service area, and in collaboration with area colleges and universities where possible. Project Success is also designed to work cooperatively with local teachers, counselors and administrators.

The project is designed to recruit participants as seventh graders (or fifth and sixth graders in middle schools) and continue to work with these students throughout high school. Services are to be provided to a core group of 30 to 60 Hispanic seventh graders the first year, depending upon the capacity of the local demonstration site. In addition, the project can provide other, less intensive activities for other Hispanic students.

Because decisions about curriculum choice are often made in an information vacuum, many Project Success activities are designed to increase information about academic choices and the implications of those choices for future educational and career options, and give students the skills to make their high aspirations become reality. Other activities are designed to increase students' awareness of a wide variety of careers, especially those which may be outside their range of experience, including non-traditional, entrepreneurial and professional careers.

However, merely providing students with better information and raising their sights to plan for new careers overlooks the fact that many Hispanic students have serious academic deficits by the time they reach junior high school. National data indicate that 39.5% of Hispanic youngsters in junior high school or middle school grades are already enrolled below expected grade level. Since Project Success is designed to work with "at-risk" youth, most project participants will need additional assistance to improve their academic performance. These students typically need not only remedial assistance in one or more subject areas, but also help in "learning how to learn."

Toward that end, one of the most critical components of Project Success is providing students with assistance in setting and meeting goals. Each student in the core group is assigned a Project Success counselor to work with the student and his or her parents, teachers and counselors to assess academic strengths and weaknesses, set short- and long-range academic goals and an individual "success" plan to achieve those goals and explore individual career and educational interests. These goals may include: changes in study habits, more regular attendance at school, more active classroom participation, improvement in grades, or seeking additional help from teachers at school. Project Success counselors monitor student progress toward meeting these individual goals on a monthly basis via meetings or telephone conversations with the student.

Project Success offers academically-oriented seminars and special mini-courses on such topics as de-mystifying algebra (a pre-algebra seminar), research and study skills, and effective test-taking techniques. Project Success also coordinates a tutorial resource bank, and recruits teachers, retired teachers, business persons and other community members to provide tutorial services to project students. Other Project Success activities may include "job shadowing" and internships to help students learn more about careers of interest, and visits to local colleges and universities. Some Project Success sites use the Time to Read program, developed by Time, Inc., in conjunction with their volunteer banks as a reading improvement component of the program.

Parent participation is a central project goal, and is demonstrated both via parent participation in the scheduled parent seminars and by parents providing their children with academic reinforcement and monitoring at home. Because many parents of project participants have limited formal education, they often have difficulty in playing an active role in their children's education. Parent seminars seek to familiarize parents with school requirements and the outcomes of curricular tracking, and teach ways in which parents can help their children "learn to learn" by reinforcing good time management, encouraging reading, and setting household rules for homework. The project also seeks to familiarize parents with their children's very real opportunities for college attendance, and helps provide motivation and support for participating youth.

Each Project Success site is to be staffed by a full-time project coordinator, one or more part-time counselors, and one or more part-time teachers or special tutors. Core project staff are to be bilingual and biliterate. Consultants may be identified or hired for special seminars or mini-courses. However, the project is designed to identify, coordinate, and tap existing and potential community resources, including local members of the business community, members of business and professional clubs and associations, local school, college and university resource persons, parents, and members of other community institutions. Thus, the project coordinator must serve as a community "bridge builder."

C. Project Second Chance

Project Second Chance is a community-based educational program which provides Hispanic dropouts with a second opportunity to complete a high school education. While students dropout of high school for a variety of reasons, research has shown that many students who leave without diplomas report that they have few close relationships with caring adults at school. A large proportion report leaving because they have come to the conclusion -- often based on repeated school failure and low reading levels -- that "school is not for me." A significant number also leave school because they have other problems (especially teenage pregnancy, parenting responsibilities or substance-abuse problems). These situations require special counseling and support services which are often unavailable in public high schools.

Project Second Chance is designed to address many dropouts' needs for counseling and support services to deal with special problems and responsibilities, provide closer relationships with caring adults, and

academic instruction to help students gain the skills and confidence needed to succeed in school. Project Second Chance programs concentrate on providing students with three types of assistance:

- Academic instruction so that students may receive high school diplomas or GED certificates through the program, or instruction to help them "catch up" to return to high school;

- Opportunities to learn about and explore different careers and professions, and counseling to become aware of the planning and steps which must be taken in high school to enter the chosen field; and

- Assistance in developing the personal skills which will help students succeed in school, in the world of work and in their families.

In states where private, non-profit educational programs can be licensed or certified by the state to provide diplomas, Project Second Chance sites should endeavor to secure such status so that graduates of their educational programs may earn high school diplomas. Where appropriate, the project may also assist participating students -- especially younger dropouts -- to return to the public school system and complete an academic program leading to a diploma. For those students who do re-enter the public school, Project Second Chance may continue to provide counseling, supportive and tutorial services to help students succeed.

Instructional programs are based upon individual academic and language assessments, and use individual and small group counseling to set academic and career goals. Counselors provide students with the assistance and skills to evaluate their own progress and set new goals. Each student works with a counselor and their parents to develop an individual "success" plan which guides their work at Project Second Chance. Academic instruction may be provided via a combination of individually-paced curricula, special, intensive "mini-courses" in selected subjects, or other instructional strategies. Where individually-paced or computerized instruction is used, the project must take care to provide other opportunities for student-teacher interaction, discussion, and development of critical thinking and analytical skills. Some use of cooperative learning techniques is strongly encouraged. Some Project Second Chance sites use the Time to Read program, developed by Time, Inc. as a reading improvement component. This program may be implemented by staff or volunteer tutors who are part of the project's volunteer bank.

Part of the Project Second Chance model is the use of volunteers to form a volunteer bank. Projects are encouraged to recruit volunteers from a wide cross-section of the community, and include individuals from a variety of career backgrounds. The volunteer bank may be used to provide additional, individualized tutoring to selected students, to pair students up with other "mentors" from the community, and/or to help students learn about careers. When the volunteer bank is used for career education, individuals are asked to make presentations about their careers and otherwise work with one or more students who are interested in that profession. This assistance may take the form of inviting students to their workplace to "shadow" the volunteer and observe his or her job first hand, providing tours, internships, summer or

afterschool jobs, keeping in periodic touch with the student(s) to check on their school progress or help with subjects related to the field of interest, etc.

Project Second Chance may be operated as a component of an employment and training program, or as an independent educational program. It may also be appropriately used for an alternative high school setting serving dropouts or high risk youth.

D. Parents as Partners

While there is strong evidence that children whose parents are active partners in their education have higher educational outcomes than children whose parents assume a passive role, Hispanic parents often have great difficulty in being effective educational partners. High rates of English illiteracy among Hispanic adults tremendously limit their ability to help their own children learn to read, or to assess the quality of education that their children are receiving.

Additionally, at least half of Hispanic adults have had unsuccessful school experiences and often lack the skills to teach their children how to succeed in school. Unfortunately, few schools attempt to provide meaningful parent education which encompasses instruction in English language skills. Adult education programs are chronically underfunded relative to demand, and school-based parent involvement efforts too often focus on simply "encouraging" parents to become involved rather than "enabling" them to do so. Additionally, many activities which are labeled as "parent involvement" define such involvement rather narrowly, in terms of attendance at school advisory meetings or volunteering in classrooms. There is a tremendous need for comprehensive training programs which provide parents with an array of skills -- including English language sills where necessary -- to be effective partners in education.

The Parents as Partners project is designed to be operated either as a free-standing project, or as a component of another school or community-based educational program (such as the Academia del Pueblo, Project Success or Project Second Chance). Its purpose is to increase the effectiveness of parents as active partners by providing them with additional information about the schools and improved skills in effective parenting. The project builds and strengthens a three-way partnership among parents, the schools their children attend,and the greater community.

Each local Parents as Partners Project targets a particular school or schools and is staffed by a bilingual Program Coordinator responsible for program development and project monitoring. Training priorities are established by a project advisory network composed or participating parents, school personnel, representatives of the local business community and other community members. Where possible, programs establish linkages with universities and colleges to secure the assistance of experts in parent training, child development, techniques for teaching and learning at home, and family-life skills. Such a linkage also has the advantage of provide volunteer and internship opportunities for student teachers and practicums for other students working in relevant fields.

Three basic types of services may be offered, either alone or in conjunction with each other:

- Training and follow-up assistance to help parents create a home environment which reinforces and expands children's learning;

- Training to help parents monitor their children's educational progress, become more effective participants on school advisory committees and better individual advocates for their children's educational rights, and for improvement of community schools; and

- Organization and support of a local Committee for Academic Excellence to provide a continuing forum for assessment and cooperative projects to improve educational opportunities in local schools.

Since parents are their children's first and most important teachers, the first type of project services if provided via a series of parent seminars and training sessions to improve effective parenting skills and help parents create a home environment which supports learning. Such seminars or mini-courses might include sessions on: child development and learning theory, language acquisition, effective parenting skills, effective discipline, communication and dispute resolution skills, and simple activities to reinforce reading or math skills at home. Seminars will be developed with input from participating parents and will draw upon available local resources. They will always be scheduled at a time which allows working and single parents to participate, and will include other relatives (grandparents, older siblings, etc.) who may have caretaker responsibilities. Project staff may be available to help parents design individual strategies or household rules, or to provide extra assistance in monitoring children's attendance and achievement at school.

In addition to teaching parents the skills to assist their individual children, the project may also elect to help parents increase their ability to understand and successfully interact with established school structures. Specific training priorities must be established by local communities based on needs assessments, but in most communities,training will need to be provided in understanding the structure and functions of advisory committees, school governance and finance, understanding school budgets, legal rights of children, and effective advocacy strategies. Where school-based training programs provide such training, Parents as Partners staff will hep parents to take advantage of these opportunities and learn to pass these skills on to others.

Long-range improvement in the quality of schooling for local children is also an important goal of the Parents as Partners project, although not every community may be immediately ready to implement this component of the project. Parents as Partners projects may organize and staff a local Committee for Academic Excellence, which meets monthly and provides participants with the training necessary to monitor and analyze educational opportunities for neighborhood children. The Committee exists to monitor students and school performance, identify problems and solutions, advocate for appropriate policies and programs, and assist the school in improving educational

outcomes. Parents as Partners staff function as trainers and support staff for the Committee. The Committee should also work with the schools to design and support programs for school improvement. Some examples of recommended collaboration include: sponsoring community fund raisers to purchase additional equipment or special materials or securing their donation from area businesses; organization, training and coordination of a "volunteer bank" as a resource for classroom teachers; assistance in translating materials into Spanish; and assistance in teacher in-service training, especially regarding parent involvement and information on the local community and the cultures of its residents.

Because some parents lack full proficiency in English, training activities in all three areas should be available in both Spanish and English, but Parents as Partners staff may also work with parents to help them improve English skills. In some communities, the project may initiate English classes for parents; in others, it may refer parents to other available public or private courses. Some agencies may be able to help provide parent scholarships for private literacy or English-as-a-Second-Language courses.

E. Teacher Support Network

The Teacher Support Network is a community-based project to recognize the efforts and increase the effectiveness of public school teachers -- Hispanic and non-Hispanic -- working with Hispanic children, by providing them with additional resources,support, assistance and training. The Network's goal is to improve teacher-community relations and enhance the quality of education available to Hispanic children by strengthening the skills and broadening the knowledge of their teachers.

The Network may be coordinated by one or more local Hispanic community-based organizations. A vital project component is an advisory committee which includes parents, community-members, local business persons and corporate representatives, school administrators, teacher trainers, teachers and representatives of the local teacher association(s). Subject to local needs and resources, the Network may serve the staff or one neighborhood school, several selected schools, key groups of teachers or counselors, or -- in small districts -- the entire district teaching staff.

Network activities start with an assessment of perceived teacher needs. With the cooperation of local school officials, teachers in the target schools are surveyed to determine what they believe would make their jobs easier and would make them more effective teachers. Teachers are also polled to gather information on their knowledge about the Hispanic community and culture, their attitudes and expectations for Hispanic students, and their level of experience and comfort in teaching linguistically and culturally different children. Information on teacher language skills, academic background and previous inservice training is also collected. Parents and community leaders are also consulted during the assessment process.

Based on assessed needs and the level of community resources, the Teacher Support Network may undertake a variety of programs and activities, including:

- A newsletter for teachers with information on the community, summaries of recent national research, training opportunities and available resources, and recognition for outstanding teacher activities;

- Coordination of volunteer banks to provide teachers with extra classroom tutors, special guest speakers, translators for parent meetings, or "room parents" to help with parent involvement;

- Organization of a career exploration volunteer bank for students of participating teachers, staffed by volunteers from local businesses who provide internship or job shadowing opportunities for students;

- Coordination of special inservice training sessions for teachers on topics of high interest. Workshops may be offered in conjunction with district inservice training, in cooperation with a local university or professional association, or independently;

- Special teacher recognition programs to reward outstanding teachers;

- Mini-grants to teachers wishing to implement special projects to improve instruction or expand the opportunities available to Hispanic students; and/or

- Spanish improvement classes for teachers.

Participating teachers are re-surveyed at the end of the project year to assess differences in attitudes or behaviors over the year. Individual Networks may also wish to obtain parent assessments and gather pre- and post-project information on student performance to determine whether there are visible differences in student attendance and achievement over the life of the project, or between Network teachers and those not participating in the Network.

Academia del Pueblo

Essential Components

The Council has identified the following as essential components of the **Academia del Pueblo:**

- The project must primarily serve children in kindergarten through fourth grade who are experiencing difficulty in school as indicated by low reading ability, limited proficiency in English, above average rates of absenteeism or disciplinary problems, low test scores, or previous incidence of retention.

- Highest priority for admission is to be given to students who are in immediate danger of being retained to repeat a grade level.

- Improvement of reading skills must be a central program component.

- Each Academia del Pueblo program shall contain a component designed to assist the parents of children enrolled in the program. Such a program shall seek to increase the parent's ability to help their children learn, confidence and skills in interacting with the school systems, and their expectations and aspirations for their children.

- Instructional programs for Academia children must be based on an individualized assessment of need.

- Each Academia project must secure a cooperative agreement with the schools referring children to the project and establish a regular means of communication between the Academia and the school(s).

- Each Academia must be based on the philosophy that all children can succeed in school given proper assistance and instruction.

- Each Academia must have on its instructional staff at least one certified and experienced teacher.

- Each Academia must make some use (either on a volunteer or staff basis) of student tutors to provide positive role models for younger children and allow for cross-age tutoring.

- Each Academia must provide students with instruction in whichever language they are best able to learn. Limited English proficient students are also to receive assistance with English language development.

- Because the Academia del Pueblo is a demonstration project, each Academia must comply with the evaluation design included in this manual, and collect and report data to the Council evaluator on a timely basis.

Desirable components include:

- Some provision for providing enrichment activities to gifted children or children meeting or exceeding grade requirements. Such children may be served in a separate group or on a special day, or a restricted number of slots may be allocated for these children to participate in the general Academia program.

- Provision of enrichment activities for all children (low and high achieving).

- Instruction in Spanish as a second language.

- Instruction with and about computers.

PROJECT SUCCESS

I. PURPOSE

Project Success is a community-based after-school and summer program designed to:

- Increase the proportion of Hispanic students who enroll and succeed in academic curricular tracks in high school;
- Improve school holding power for Hispanic students; and
- Increase students' knowledge of and academic preparedness for a variety of professional and technical careers.

II. SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Project Success is a supplemental educational and counseling program designed to be operated by a community-based organization in cooperation with local public or private schools serving Hispanic students. The program is designed to provide services primarily to youth in the middle grades since most curricular tracking begins prior to high school, and because child development literature indicates that early adolescence is a "second chance" time in the lives of many youngsters -- a chance that many Hispanic children are in need of. For Hispanic students, four in ten of whom are enrolled below grade level by this point in their academic lives, this may be their last chance to catch up and get on firmer academic ground before entering the rigid curricular track system typical of U.S. high schools.

Project Success may also provide services to high school students, depending upon local need. However, although the project may be able to improve the academic performance and expand the career awareness of high school students, it is more difficult to help students change curricular tracks in midstream. Programs serving high school students will probably need to arrange for ways in which students can "make up" classes for credit or otherwise qualify for academic tracks if they are missing essential prerequisites. When used in high schools, Project Success concentrates on improving academic performance, providing career and post-high school educational counseling to targeted Hispanic high school students, and providing continued mentoring and assistance to students who participated in middle grades Project Success programs. Some Project Success sites may also provide services to children in elementary school grades if significant tracking decisions are made prior to enrollment in junior high or middle school.

Participating students are assigned a project counselor who meets individually with the student and his or her family to help the student develop and plan academic and career goals. The Project Success counselor also acts as a liaison with the student's regular school counselor, to ensure that the student has access to adequate support services and opportunities

within the school. Students participate in a variety of after-school, weekend and summer seminars on selected academic and career topics. Individual and/or small group tutoring is also arranged by the project as needed to help participating students meet their individual goals. In addition to family involvement in planning and goal setting, parents and other family members are invited and encouraged to attend the various career seminars. Several workshops are provided just for parents on a range of topics identified by Project Success staff, parents and students, but including such areas as: discipline and parenting, time management and planning, college admission requirements and financial aid and college application procedures.

Project Success

Essential Components

While Project Success is designed to be modified to respond to local needs and resources, the National Council of La Raza has defined the following essential program components:

- The majority of the participating students must be at risk of being tracked into non-academic programs (or already be in such programs.) Students enrolled in or achieving below grade level are primary candidates for participation in Project Success;
- The project must involve parents and other significant family members;
- The project must include both academic services and career awareness activities since students need to be both encouraged and enabled;
- The project should provide real opportunities for students who are below grade level to "catch up" with peers by providing tutoring, special classes or seminars, or by arranging the availability of mastery exams through the school district;
- The project must have some type of cooperating relationship with the schools and provide for communication with the students' school counselors;
- The project must provide opportunities for students to learn about a variety of professional and technical careers, and include opportunities for youth to form relationships with adults in careers of interest;
- The project must provide youth with the opportunity to form supportive relationships with knowledgeable and caring adults who are neither family members nor regular school teachers;
- The project must include bilingual personnel;
- The project must include a plan for staff development and team planning and evaluation;
- The project must include an evaluation component; and
- Project activities must reflect the developmental needs of early adolescents if that is the target population.

TEACHER SUPPORT NETWORK

I. PURPOSE

The Teacher Support Network is designed to improve the quality of education available to Hispanic children by improving the skills of their teachers and increasing the expectations which their teachers hold for them.

II. SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The Teacher Support Network is a community-based project to increase the effectiveness of public school teachers -- Hispanic and non-Hispanic -- working with Hispanic children by providing them with additional resources, assistance and training. The Network's goal is to improve teacher-community relations and enhance the quality of education available to Hispanic children by improving teacher skills and expectations.

The network may be coordinated by one or more local Hispanic community-based organizations. A vital project component is an advisory committee which incorporates parents, community members, local business persons and corporate representatives, school administrators, teachers trainers from local universities, teachers and representatives of the local teacher association. Depending upon local needs and resources, the network may serve the staff of one neighborhood school, several selected schools, key groups of teachers or counselors, or -- in small communities -- the entire district teaching staff.

Network activities start with an assessment of perceived teacher needs. With the cooperation of local school officials, teachers in the target schools are surveyed to determine what, in their opinion, would make them more effective teachers. Teachers are also polled to gather information on their knowledge about the Hispanic community and culture, their attitudes and expectations for Hispanic students, and their level of experience and comfort in teaching linguistically- and culturally-different children. Information on teacher language skills, academic background and previous in-service training will also be collected.

Based on assessed needs and the level of community resources, the Teacher Support Network may undertake a variety of programs and activities, including:

- Production of a monthly or quarterly newsletter for teachers including information on the community, summaries of recent national research, training opportunities and available resources, and recognition for outstanding teacher activities.

- Coordination of volunteer banks to provide teachers with extra classroom tutors, special guest speakers, translators for parent meetings, or "room parents" to help with parent involvement.

- Organization of a career exploration volunteer bank for students of participating teachers staffed by volunteers from the local business community who provide internship or job shadowing opportunities for students.

- Coordination of special in-service training sessions for teachers on topics of high interest. Workshops may be offered in conjunction with district in-service training, in cooperation with a local university or professional association, or independently.

- Operation of special teacher recognition programs to award outstanding or improved teachers.

- Provision of "mini-grants" to teachers wishing to implement special projects to improve instruction or expand the opportunities available to Hispanic students.

- Organization of a series of Spanish improvement classes -- for either Hispanic or non-Hispanic teachers.

Participating teachers are re-surveyed at the end of the project year to assess any differences in attitudes or behaviors over the year.

III. ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

While Teacher Support Network is designed to be modified to local needs and resources, the National Council of La Raza has defined the following essential program components:

- The project should provide assistance to Hispanic and non-Hispanic classroom teachers serving Hispanic children.
- The project must include both educational and motivational activities since teachers need to be encouraged and enabled to better serve their pupils.
- The project must provide opportunities for participating teachers to form supportive relationships with other teachers and community members.
- The project must offer activities and services which encourage the continuing professional development of participating teachers.
- The project must provide teachers with the opportunity to share successful strategies and programs with each other.
- The project must include an evaluation component.
- The project must seek the cooperation and participation of local school officials (principals, bilingual supervisors, staff development specialists, etc.)
- Early in the planning phase, the project must include an assessment of teacher-perceived needs and attitudes.
- The project must also assess parent and community perceptions of teacher attitudes, needs and roles.
- The project must include a formal or informal advisory committee.
- The project may provide opportunities for Hispanic and non-Hispanic college students preparing to teach in communities which are predominantly Hispanic.